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How can he never lie to us, if 'dirty tricks' boys go on the loose?

By John Marks

The controversy surrounding the CIA has little to do with intelligence. It is covert action — or the use of money, violence, and propaganda to secretly manipulate events — which is at issue, as agency heads have allowed the intelligence process to be overshadowed and distorted by the CIA's covert operations.

In the past, most congressmen and even presidents could claim ignorance about CIA operations. This comfortable "cover" has now been blown — probably never to return. From now on, Congress and the president will have to share responsibility for unleashing the tactics of covert action, and these tactics — bribery, subversion, paramilitary warfare, and even assassination — are criminal in nature, even when practiced by people sincerely convinced they are protecting the "national security."

Covert operations have been cut back since their heyday a few years ago. Intelligence oversight committee member Sen. Gary Hart stated, as the Ford administration was ending, that there were six such operations going on around the world — a level which may or may not be acceptable under Secretary of State Vance's guideline limiting CIA intervention abroad to "the most extraordinary possible circumstances." Yet, the CIA's vast clandestine apparatus remains largely intact, particularly in the Third World where it has been used mainly for either putting or keeping in power anti-communist governments from which the U.S. has seemed willing to accept virtually any level of internal repression, as long as domestic order was guaranteed and foreign investments protected.

The maintenance of this CIA-controlled network serves to corrupt the societies we are supposedly trying to "save." If the United States has a legitimate national interest in helping a particular foreign government (or faction), it should do so openly, in accordance with our own laws.

The Carter administration as a whole and the nominee to head the CIA, Admiral Stansfield Turner, will soon have to make a basic choice: They can either choose to

clean out the CIA's Clandestine Services and put the full force of the agency into the intelligence gathering and analysis business, or they can try to protect past secrets and capabilities by aligning themselves with the professional operatives and their supporters against a changing society. The Carter people will find it difficult to have things both ways.

If the administration chooses to continue covert action, it will find itself inexorably drawn into the process of covering up what the CIA is doing. Secret operations are, by definition, based on deception and lies — which President Carter has already promised not to use on us. Moreover, there will be no respite from press disclosures about CIA activities which, it turns out, are only well hidden from reporters and other investigators who are not paying attention. Outraged whistle-blowers and infighting bureaucrats will not stop exposing such recent activities as a secret CIA war in Angola, wiretapping in Micronesia, or covert electioneering in Italy. As long as the executive branch insists on using the CIA secretly to do things it is unwilling to stand up for openly, the agency will remain a legitimate investigative target.

Even if the press could somehow be turned off or diverted, there would still be grand juries, congressional committees, public interest groups, and the Justice Department carrying on probes that will expose CIA operations. For example, investi-

gations already under way should soon tell us how the CIA could have learned in 1970 about a plot personally organized by the president of South Korea to subvert the Congress of the United States without doing anything meaningful to stop it until 1975. Or what has been the CIA's relationship with — and knowledge of — corporate bribery, the Howard Hughes empire, organized crime, the drug trade, and other forms of corruption around which covert operators seem to thrive; or why did the CIA withhold material evidence from the Warren Commission and then, from 1967 on, embark on a worldwide "disinformation" campaign against critics of the offi-

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